

## John's Gospel Lecture 19

### WASH IN THE POOL OF SILOAM

John 9:1-12

Key verse 9:7

"Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam' (this word means 'Sent'). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing."

As we know, in John's gospel, there are seven "I am" statements that Jesus declares about himself, and also, seven miraculous signs that point to Jesus. A sign (in Greek "semeion") means a token or a mark that symbolizes the real one. In today's passage, we read the sixth sign of the seven recorded in John's gospel. Jesus healing a man born blind itself is a miracle that proves Jesus is the Messiah. Meanwhile, the Pool of Siloam is a sign that tells us who Jesus is. Through this passage, may God help us to know who Jesus is. May God help us go to him and wash our eyes in him everyday.

Look at verse 1. "As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth." In the last part of John chapter 8, the Jews were trying to stone Jesus. So, Jesus hid himself and slipped away from the temple grounds. As he went along, he saw a man. Who was he? He was a man blind from birth. The U.S. has a pretty good social security system and people with blindness receive support from the government and society. Yet, back in those days, there was no social care. It was next to impossible for a blind man to have a job apart from begging. People with disability struggled to survive with a meager income.

The man was blind from birth. He had never seen the light. He simply did not have the sense of seeing, and did not understand what it meant to see. How can we explain, for example, the color red to a blind man? We could tell him that red is like fire or something very hot. Blue? We could tell him that blue is like sea water, or something cold. But could he really understand? No. When you do not have the sense, you simply cannot understand what other people acknowledge through that sense.

With our eyes, we see the beautiful world that God created. Ecclesiastes 11:7 says "Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun." But this man had never seen the beautiful sky, the clouds, the roses and the tulips. How beautiful is the smiling face of a baby! Grandparents are so happy when they see their grandchildren smiling. At their smile, all their stress disappears! Yet the man did not have the luxury. He just lived in darkness.

When Jesus' disciples saw him, they thought, "I am not like this man. I am O.K. Yet I feel sorry for him. Why was he born blind? What or who caused him to be blind?" So, they asked Jesus. Look at verse 2. "His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'" In those days, it was traditionally believed by the Jews that the cause of serious disabilities or diseases, such as leprosy, was sin. In fact, some parts of the Scriptures say that the cause is the sin of their

parents (Ex 20:5, 34:7, Dt 28:58,59) or of themselves (Eze 18:20). Yet that is not always the case. The Scriptures also say that disease or suffering is not necessarily because of sin. For instance, God allowed Job to suffer so that his faith might be refined like pure gold (Job 23:10), and that he might know God more deeply (Job 42:1-6). God allowed a thorn in the Apostle Paul's flesh so that he might not become conceited as he had received surpassingly great revelations of God (2Co 12:7).

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Who sinned? This leads us into a very fatalistic dilemma. Suppose the man sinned. What kind of sin could he have committed in his mother's womb? Apart from kicking his mother's womb a few times! Suppose his parents sinned. It was not fair that their baby should be the victim. A baby cannot defend himself. How sad and fatalistic his life would be! Still today, when we see some unfortunate people, we feel sorry for them and think that someone has to take the blame. Why did something happen? Who caused it? Who is to blame? We are obsessed with the causality that someone must take the blame! If there is no one, then we blame God! Yet if we really could blame anyone, they are Adam and Eve. Had they not disobeyed God, then sin, the root cause of all human misery, would not have come into this world. In the Garden of Eden, there was no misery, no diseases, and no death. Sin and, its consequence death, is the root of all sufferings in this world.

What was Jesus' answer? Look at verse 3. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." Jesus did not tell them about the cause of the man's blindness. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." Jesus simply rejected the Jewish traditional belief and fatalism altogether. "This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." Jesus just talked about the purpose of what happened. Jesus was not past-oriented, but future-oriented. We must be like Jesus. We cannot have all the answers. There are things only God knows. Trusting in God's sovereignty, we must leave them to God, and do the things which God wants us to do in our given situation.

The man was born blind yet, even in his condition, the works of God had to be displayed in his life. What do "the works of God" refer to? In John's gospel, the work of God is revealing Jesus is the Christ so that people will believe and have life in his name (Jn 20:31). Like the man in this passage, some people are born with a certain disability. Some are brought up in a difficult family. Some are not given proper education. Everyone has a fatalistic element in their lives. They think they are innocent victims and try to blame someone. Yet, we must believe in the purpose of God in every situation.

We know the famous story about Joseph in the book of Genesis. A beloved boy of seventeen, he was sold off as a slave to Egypt by his older brothers. He was a slave in Egypt, and then he was imprisoned for years. When he saw his brothers again in Egypt, he could have brutally revenged them. Yet he said, "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you as a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great

deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt" (Gen 45:7-8). Joseph's perspective was completely different from ours. His perspective was that of faith in God. Our God is good and sovereign. God controls even the movement of the dust in the air. He never fails or makes a mistake. In all things, he works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Ro 8:28). We must believe that God loves us and he wants us to see things from God's point of view. I pray that we may interpret all things from the perspective of faith in God, and do the works of God.

Now, how should we do the works of God? Look at verse 4. "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." As long as it is day, we must do the works of God. What does the word "day" mean? We can find it in the following verse that "night is coming, when no one can work." Here, "night" refers to the time when we no longer live in this world, and hence, "day" should mean the duration of the time while we live in this world.

When we are young, we do not think about our death too much. We just think that life should be long enough to try, and enjoy this and that. But life is not that long. The Bible says that our lives are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (Jas 4:14). It is not true that we will be able to do God's works any time whenever we want. Night is coming! Therefore, while we are young, and while we are able, we must do the works of God. Some people just wait for the right time. Yet you will never have the right time. While we live in this world every single moment is an opportunity.

Last month, I visited a missionary who was not well. Among what she said, one thing comes up to my mind. It is that she was very thankful that she had been a part of our spiritual community, Chicago UBF, for the past many years, working, serving together with other co-workers for the works of God. She said, "At the end of your life, the only thing that remains is what you have done for God. Everything else is in vain. Only what you did for God is not in vain!" That she worked for God during the prime years of her life was her greatest thanksgiving topic. Her prayer was that she really wants to urge every single young people to find their life direction, as soon as possible, and devote themselves to God. Yes, the time that we are not able to work will come very soon. It may be in a few years or even in a few days. May God help us to cherish our God-given lives, and use our times for the works of God.

Look at verse 5. "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Jesus is the light of the world, while he is in the world. Of course, Jesus is the light of the world even though he is not in the world. The reason why he spoke in this way was because he helped his disciples to realize that the time would come for Jesus to depart this world. He wanted them to learn from Jesus and actively participate in his works for God. Why is Jesus the light of the world? It is because Jesus can drive out sin, the real darkness of the world, and give us eternal life.

In verse 6. Jesus specifically shows us how to do the works of God. "After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes" (6). Jesus' way of helping the man can seem a little grotesque. It does not look very hygienic. Yet, in those days, using saliva was one of the folk remedies for treatment. When Jesus was healing a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, he spat saliva and touched the man's tongue (Mk 7:32-33). Also in Bethsaida, Jesus took a blind man by the hand and spat on the man's eyes and healed him (Mk 8:23). Whether the saliva had any medical effect or not, in this passage, by doing so Jesus helped the man to realize that Jesus was healing him.

Also in this way, Jesus showed his personal love for the man. In his own way, the man must have felt the love of Jesus through his human touch and gentleness. "Oh, I know this man, called Jesus, must be busy preaching and helping many people. But now he is helping me, a poor blind man! I do not deserve Jesus' personal care." He must have been moved by Jesus' touch. Question. Why is it important for him to feel loved? It is because obedience comes love. A young child does not know much. Yet one thing he does know is that his mother loves him. So he trusts in his mother. Whatever she says the child listens to. By serving the man with love, Jesus helped him to trust and obey Jesus. By believing Jesus, he would open his eyes, and further, open his spiritual eyes and receive eternal life.

Look at verse 7. "'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam' (this word means 'Sent'). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing." The Pool of Siloam is one of the two pools in Jerusalem together with the Pool of Bethesda (5:2). The pool of Siloam was located in the southern part of the city, within the walls of Jerusalem. It was about 60 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet deep. We do not know how far from where Jesus was to the pool, yet it would not have been easy for the man to go to the pool with his chin up so that the mud might not fall. In people's eyes, his walking to the pool with the mud on his eyes must have looked funny. But the man did not care. He trusted in Jesus and obeyed. He went to the pool and washed with the water from the pool. He opened his eyes and began to see. Of course, as he did not have any prior experience of seeing, the sight of everything must have been shocking to him. At first, he might have been very confused. But anyway, he opened his eyes and came to see the bright world.

We read many miracles written in the Old Testament. Yet, there is no record of a blind man having his eyes opened. A blind man opening his eyes would be the unique miracle that only the promised Messiah could perform (Isa 29:18, 35:5, 42:7). The water of the pool did not have a special miraculous healing power. The man opened his eyes solely because of Jesus. Jesus opened his eyes and by doing so, he revealed himself to be the Messiah promised to come. As I said earlier, this is the sixth sign of the seven in John's gospel. A sign is a symbol of something else. The author particularly mentions that Siloam means "Sent." In all English Bibles, the phrase "(this word means 'Sent'))" is written in parenthesis. So, you may think that this phrase is not important, or that it is not in the original text. That is not the case. In the Greek

text, there is no punctuation. No quotation marks, no periods, and no parentheses. Those who translated the Bible inserted punctuations and parentheses for the readers to more easily understand the passage.

The author, John, deliberately highlighted the meaning of Siloam as "Sent." Why? It was because Siloam is a sign of Jesus. Genesis (KJV) 49:10 says, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be". Scholars say that the word "Shiloh" refers to the Messiah who would come. Isaiah 8:6 also says, "Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah." This verse talks about the Israelites' rejection of the Messiah, Shiloah. The Hebrew word "Shiloah" (or Siloah) means "Sent." Further, in John's gospel, Jesus talked about himself that he was "sent" from God. From John chapter 1:1 up to this verse 9:6, Jesus' claim that he was "sent" by God is repeated over and over again. How many times? The total is 23 times. Jesus is the one "Sent," and he is Siloam. Yes, Jesus came to this world as a spiritual Pool of Siloam to open the eyes of all those who are born blind.

According to the Bible, everyone is dead in their transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1). Spiritually speaking, all people are blind from birth. Even though people live with their physical eyes wide open, from God's point of view, many of them are blind. We know Stephen Hawking, the famous English theoretical physicist who passed away last year. He said, in his last book, that the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing, and there was no possibility of God in our universe. Even though he was a genius in science, his spiritual eyes were not opened and he could not see God.

In history, people had a question. "How can a cat that falls from high above safely land on the ground?" People wanted to see the movement of the bones of a cat. Yet they could not see with their eyes. So what did they do? They used X-rays. With X-rays, they took a video of the cat's movement. It came out like this. (Video: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=BEI8Wkz1EOM&feature=youtu.be> ) The shock of the cat's feet quickly spread to its knees and spine. The shock of touching the ground spread very smoothly and quickly all over its body, and hence, the cat was not hurt. My point is that only through X-rays, can we see the movement of the bones. Likewise, in order to see the spiritual world, we need a special light. Jesus gives us that light. Unless people come to Jesus and receive the light, they can never see the spiritual reality. They cannot see the kingdom of God. They cannot see the works of the Holy Spirit. They can see only the physical world throughout their lives.

However, when we come to Jesus, and are washed with his blood at Calvary, all our sins are cleansed. Then we can see God and his kingdom. When we come to him, God makes his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2Co 4:6). Jonathan Edwards, an American theologian and preacher in the 18th century, called it the "divine light." Only with the divine light, can we see the glory of Jesus, and come to know that Jesus is God. Whoever comes

and washes in the Pool of Jesus, their eyes are opened. Many people among us testify that when they met Jesus personally, the world looked different to them. The sky, the clouds, the birds, the trees, even their neighbors suddenly appeared beautiful and loving. It was because they began to see them with spiritual eyes.

And even though we have opened our spiritual eyes, as we live in this world, our eyes become nearsighted and blurred. Our eyes suffer from cataracts and cannot see clearly. So every day we must come to Jesus and wash our eyes. In Isaiah chapter 6, because of the death of Uzziah, a great king of Judah, and the impending decline of the nation, Isaiah could not see any hope. He was in despair and his eyes were closed. Yet, when he entered the temple, his spiritual eyes were widely opened. He saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple (Isa 6:1). He saw God's majesty and his sovereign control over the whole world.

A few weeks ago, I was anxious about some issues. I could not sleep well. My spiritual eyesight became weak. In fact, it was because of my lack of faith in God. So I repented of my unbelief and came to Jesus. I washed my eyes with the blood of Jesus. Jesus restored my spiritual eyesight 20:20 and helped me to see God clearly that he is Almighty, he knows all things, he can do all things, and that he listens to my prayers. I could leave everything to God and come to have peace in my mind.

Likewise, from time to time, our eyes become weak and we fail to see true blessedness in Jesus, and seek worldly, temporal pleasures. We suffer from cataracts and do not see God's mercy. As a result, our hearts become hard and we cannot forgive our neighbors. At times, we cannot see the humble Jesus and we become proud. We do not see God's wisdom to win the real victory by humbling and denying oneself. The devil makes our eyesights weaken, and makes us focus on just the problems, and makes those problems appear as big as Goliath. Yet when we come to Jesus and wash our eyes, we are able to see that God is Almighty and every problem in the world is just like a dust. When we wash in Jesus, all our fears are gone, and we can enjoy heavenly peace. We can see Jesus who shed his blood for us, and we get on our knees before him thanking him always. Praise Jesus that he is the true Siloam who opens our eyes! May we come to him and wash our eyes each and every day! People in the world do not know that they are blind. They have no idea about seeing spiritually. May God help us to have compassion for them and somehow invite them to Jesus. Jesus can drive out all darkness. He drives out the darkness of sin, and gives people eternal life to whoever believes.

In verses 8-12, the man's neighbors could not recognize him because firstly, he looked totally different, and secondly, to open the blind was an impossible feat. Yet he said that he was the man. They asked how his eyes opened. The man explained to them what had happened.

In conclusion, Jesus was sent by God. He came as the true Siloam in this world. Jesus invites all those born blind to come and wash their eyes in him. May God help us to

go to Jesus, repent of our sins, and restore our spiritual eyesight each and everyday.  
Amen!  
(Hymn 371)